

WEATHER & DISASTERS

Winter weather & icy travel

Prepare for lost heat, difficult travel and fast-changing road conditions before snow or freezing rain arrives.

Confusion, collapse, severe cold exposure or breathing difficulty needs emergency help. Call 911.

Prepare home and household

- Check forecasts and keep battery-backed alerts. Store warm layers, lights, food, water and essential care supplies where accessible.
- Arrange heating-system maintenance and working smoke and CO alarms. Know where to go if home cannot stay safely warm.
- Plan check-ins for people living alone and those needing transport or powered equipment. Bring pets into suitable shelter.

Limit cold exposure

- Wear layers and stay dry. Cover exposed skin and take shelter breaks before exhaustion or numbness develops.
- Suspected hypothermia needs prompt medical attention. Move to shelter, replace wet clothing with dry layers and handle the person gently.
- For numb, pale or waxy skin, protect the area and seek medical advice. Do not rub frostbite or use a stove or heating pad.

Make the road decision early

- Avoid unnecessary travel in deteriorating conditions. Check Iowa 511 and forecasts; tell someone your route and arrival time.
- Clear snow and ice from the vehicle. Carry a light, blankets, water, food, charger and required medicines.
- Drive slowly with more stopping space and avoid abrupt movements. Do not use cruise control on slippery roads or drive around closures.

If travel stops

- If stranded in severe weather, stay with the vehicle unless an immediate hazard makes that unsafe. Call for help with your location.
- Keep the exhaust outlet clear if running the engine; follow emergency guidance and conserve fuel. Never run a vehicle in an enclosed garage.
- Stay away from frozen rivers and uncertain lake ice. Icy pavement and ice over open water require different decisions; neither warrants a shortcut.

Sources & further guidance

[National Weather Service - winter preparation](https://www.weather.gov) | www.weather.gov

[National Weather Service - winter storm actions](https://www.weather.gov) | www.weather.gov

[Iowa State Patrol - winter driving](https://dps.iowa.gov) | dps.iowa.gov

[CDC - hypothermia prevention](https://www.cdc.gov) | www.cdc.gov